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Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8224th meeting
Thursday, 5 April 2018, 3.10 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Meza-Cuadra	(Peru)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Poland	Mr. Radomski
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Ms. Eckels-Currie

Agenda

Letter dated 13 March 2018 from the Charge d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/218)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Letter dated 13 March 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/218)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): On 14 March, the Security Council held an open meeting (see S/PV.8203) on a letter from the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Theresa May (S/2018/218, annex). It accused Russia, in monstrous and completely unfounded terms, of using chemical weapons on British territory. The representatives of the United Kingdom then promised to brief the Council regularly on the course of the investigation. But there have been no briefings. Well, never mind. We will brief the Council ourselves, in detail.

It is a month today since the Russian citizens Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia Skripal were found unconscious in the city of Salisbury. If a chemical weapon was indeed used, that constitutes a threat to non-proliferation, and that is a matter that merits the Security Council's consideration, not to mention the fact that we have something to say about it and some questions for our British colleagues.

So, what do we know about the crime and its victims? In 2006, Sergei Skripal was convicted of spying for Britain. He has been living there since being amnestied, in 2010, while retaining his Russian citizenship. From time to time he has been visited by his daughter Yulia, also a Russian national. According to the United Kingdom's version of the story, Russia had not forgiven him for his treachery and decided to liquidate him, although he clearly presented no threat of any kind to Russia. We have a number of questions about that.

First, taking a cynical approach, why wait eight years and then do this two weeks before the presidential elections and just a few months before the start of the World Cup? Why was he even allowed out of the country? Why get rid of him in such a strange and public way that was so dangerous to both the perpetrators and bystanders? Anyone familiar with detective stories such as the popular television show *Midsomer Murders*, now in its twentieth season, knows there are hundreds of relatively uncomplicated ways to cleverly do someone in. And yet apparently whoever attacked Sergei Skripal and his daughter chose an intensely poisonous chemical substance — in other words, the riskiest and most dangerous method possible. Nor did they even manage to finish the job. Everyone who was affected is apparently still alive, and Yulia, thank heaven, is rapidly recovering.

This murky business raises a great many questions, and the further into it we go, the more there are. From the very beginning, the British, represented by such well-known experts in chemistry as Prime Minister Theresa May and Foreign Minister Boris Johnson, stated unequivocally that the Skripal incident involved the use of some kind of toxic substance known as novichok and that it was highly likely that the substance originated in Russia. If this super-powerful substance had been released in Skripal's house or on the doorknob — and that appears to be the direction of the investigation — how could Sergei and Yulia have remained in a normal state for several hours afterwards, while Detective Sergeant Nick Bailey, the first person to come to their aid, lost consciousness right away? How could they all have survived this at all? The only possible explanation is that they all received an antidote almost immediately. In the experts' unanimous opinions, in order to do that, a sample of an identical substance, not just a similar one, would have had to be somewhere to hand.

The British research centre at Porton Down, known for its work on chemical weapons, is a few kilometres from the site of the attempt. We have quite a few questions about its activities too. But alas, on Tuesday, Gary Aitkenhead, the chief executive of the laboratory at Porton Down, stated that his laboratory had established that it was "a military-grade nerve agent [but] we have not verified the precise source". He also said that the Skripals had not received any antidotes. He assumed that the British Government, unlike him, might have some additional information. To give Mr. Aitkenhead his due, he did not sacrifice his professional reputation in the service of the conjectures of the British authorities. However, he also affirmed

that nothing like this would ever leave the four walls of his facility. The question is, what does he mean by "this"? What could not leave his laboratory's walls? And does the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) know about it? Whatever the answer, as far as we are concerned, all of this means that the main argument of the British — that the substance was undoubtedly of Russian origin, which is the basis for the entire body of the so-called evidence that Russia's involvement was highly likely — has disintegrated. But Mr. Aitkenhead's statement only makes the case we are considering more mysterious.

Once again, we want to explain to all and sundry that "novichok" is not a Russian copyright, despite its seemingly clearly Russian name. It was invented in the West for a line of chemical warfare agents that were developed in many countries, including the United States and Great Britain, something that will come as no surprise to experts and scientists in the field. Boris Johnson, in answer to a direct question from a Deutsche Welle correspondent, confirmed, also directly, that Britain has a sample of it at Porton Down. Yesterday, a tweet saying that the substance was definitely produced in Russia, which has already resulted in recriminations and false rumours, was deleted from the British Foreign office's website. But like Chip 'n' Dale, the British intelligence services hastened to the aid of Boris Johnson and the Foreign Office, reporting yesterday, via the newspaper *The Times*, that with the help of scientific analysis and investigation they had succeeded in establishing the probable source of the toxic substance's origins only a few days after the chemical attack in Salisbury. They stated that the Cabinet knew on 7 March that the toxin had very likely been produced in Russia. The British intelligence services believe that they have located a secret Russian laboratory where the nerve agent was produced. But wait. There is more. The article says that the British intelligence services' sources cannot confirm the laboratory's location absolutely unequivocally, although their degree of certainty about it is very high. They also believe that the Russians conducted tests to determine whether a novichok could be used for political killings. And there is more. Yesterday the *Daily Mail* also suddenly revealed that British intelligence had top-secret information from certain sources to the effect that before the attack in Salisbury, Russia had been testing a novichok nerve agent on everyday objects such as door handles. I do not even know what to say about this. It is a sort of theatre of the absurd. Could they not have come up with a more realistic fake story? Although we all know the price of British intelligence information, thanks to Tony Blair. We have told our British colleagues that they are playing with fire and that they will be sorry, because it is one thing to make totally unfounded accusations but quite another to move the conversation to a professional level, which requires clear answers to substantive questions, not diplomacy by megaphone.

I do not think that Britain's investigative authorities will thank their Government for its hasty and unequivocal conclusions. Needless to say, their politicians had not considered this. They had no idea that their sensational statements might boomerang back at them. They went all in on that convenient and timely anti-Russian canard — Russian chemical attacks — without realizing that once the dust had settled they would have to answer for their words. Meanwhile, London has begun poisoning our relations with foreign countries. In a sign of solidarity, 150 Russian diplomats have been expelled from a number of States that are allies of the United Kingdom. We know that all over the world its Ambassadors are twisting sovereign States' arms and forcing them to follow their bad example, unleashing a wave that reached as far as New York. In an unprecedented move, its allies in the United States have expelled 60 Russian diplomats, including 12 staff members of the Permanent Mission of Russia to the United Nations, without offering any proof or consulting with us as provided for in the Headquarters Agreement, and thereby acting with blatant disregard for their obligations as a host country of the United Nations.

Incidentally, this is sadly not the first time that the United States has failed to live up to its obligations. It has seized Russian diplomatic property, including property belonging to Russia here at the Permanent Mission in New York, established a 25-mile-radius travel restriction for our diplomats and refused to renew or issue United States visas. We urge the United States to take a responsible attitude to its duties as host country, return everything that it has taken from us illegally and refrain from such actions in future.

We are witnessing shocking events. At our previous meeting on 14 March I discussed this new approach to the legal system — unproven accusations made simply on the basis of suspicion. But there is something else that is no less astonishing. When I look at these British politicians' debates, interviews and statements, I am dumbfounded. O tempora! O mores! What has happened

to good old England? Is it a lack of professionalism, or a debased political culture? Or is it an entirely new political culture? I do not know. I suggest that those present draw their own conclusions.

The British authorities have been trying to ridicule Russia over the 30 or so versions of these events that have been suggested. Notice that these are not versions from the Russian authorities but the opinions of experts and journalists. Yes, there are a lot of versions because the lack of facts and evidence, but everyone in Russia wants to get to the bottom of this murky story. The British authorities, however, have very few versions — just one, in fact, which they are passing off as a final verdict. And yet they cannot identify the source of the poisoning. Is it Skripal's house? His doorknob? Flowers? Buckwheat? Laurel leaves? We have to admit that those citizens and experts, both British and otherwise, who are capable of thought have also come up with various different versions, and a great many questions to which there have been no answers. Here are just a few of them.

Where were the Skripals for four hours with their phones switched off? How were the samples taken? Who can confirm their reliability? Why were relatives not asked for their assent to the taking of blood samples? How was the antidote to an unknown chemical substance obtained so quickly, and was it given to the Skripals? What was Skripal doing? Who were his connections? Where did he travel to? Who did he spend time with? Did they meet with anyone that day or the day before? Where is the data from video surveillance cameras? How do the rushed accusations dovetail with the statements from Scotland Yard that the investigation would take weeks or even months of work? Why is Russia not being given consular access to Russian citizens who may have been the victims of a terrorist act committed on British territory? The British authorities decided, thoughtlessly, that they could get away with their unproven insinuations. Believe me, friends, this story and its investigation are not over. They have not even begun.

On 12 March, we sent the Foreign Office a note requesting access to the data in the investigation, including samples of the chemical substance that the British investigation referred to, so that our experts could examine it as part of a joint investigation. We were thereby complying with the second paragraph of article IX of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which provides that States parties should settle through the exchange of information and bilateral consultations any matter that could cause doubt about compliance with the Convention. Based on the article's provisions, Russia would have been ready to respond to a request from Great Britain within 10 days. Instead of all of that, London issued an absurd, 24-hour ultimatum, which, needless to say, we rejected, since no one, under any circumstances, is permitted to take that tone with Russia. In the ultimatum, which Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson delivered to Russia's Ambassador in London in person,

(*spoke in English*)

> "The Foreign Secretary made clear ... that there are only two possible scenarios. Either the Russian State has attempted murder on British soil using a chemical weapon or Russia has lost control of its stockpile of nerve agents. The Foreign Secretary asked the Russian Ambassador to explain which of the two possibilities was true and to account for how this Russian-produced nerve agent could have been deployed in Salisbury."

(*spoke in Russian*)

We were given 24 hours. That was the sum total of the questions the British asked us. There were no others. They look even more ridiculous given the current situation and the additional information and statements that have since emerged.

On 14 March, Mrs. May sent Mr. Ahmet Üzümcü, Director-General of the OPCW, a request for an independent analysis of the results of the British investigation of the incident in Salisbury. However, our British colleagues are forgetting that when they act in the framework of the OPCW, which we believe is the only correct way to proceed, they have obligations as well as rights, including towards us, as a full member of the OPCW. We reminded them unambiguously about that during the extraordinary meeting of the OPCW Executive Council that was convened yesterday at our request. We proposed a draft decision on a joint investigation. It was blocked by the United Kingdom and its allies, which they hastened to call a victory, despite the fact that the combined total of those voting in favour and abstaining exceeded the number of those voting against. This is understandable. Why would Britain need a joint investigation when it had already established who was guilty before the investigation began? After all, such an investigation might ruin their carefully crafted version based on such powerfully

worded arguments as "highly likely", "overwhelmingly likely", "highly plausible", "there is almost no doubt", "there is no other plausible explanation", "Russia was almost certainly to blame", "high likelihood of Russian responsibility" and "Russia is the likely perpetrator".

Boris Johnson continues to try to persuade everyone that Britain supposedly sent Russia a list of questions to which it has so far received no answers. The complete opposite is true. As I have said, we never received any list of questions. I would now like to ask the British to list those questions, if there are any. Just do not claim that accusations in the form of an ultimatum and a demand that we admit guilt for the deed are questions.

We, on the other hand, have a lot of questions, for London, the OPCW and France, which — based on what provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention is unclear — has suddenly rushed to help the British confirm the results of its so-called fast-track investigation. When we asked about this, the French informed us that Britain had given them detailed information about the investigation. As long as London refuses to provide us with this information, maybe Paris could share it with us? Today we circulated a memorandum for members' perusal. We will also circulate some comments by an official representative of Russia's Foreign Ministry with some fascinating information that I think the Council will find very interesting. We will also send the text of this statement to Council members, with a translation.

The intellectual level of the basis for the accusations and the quest to discover Russia's motives is pitiful. Boris Johnson, who constantly claims to be a Russophile, has made the absurd and amoral suggestion — and "absurd" is the kindest way of putting it — that Moscow needed an incident like this in order to unite the people before the elections. Just as amoral is his comparison of Russia's holding of the World Cup football championship with the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, in which, incidentally, a British delegation participated, including with high-level officials, unlike the Soviet Union.

Boris Johnson has alluded to Dostoevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment*, in which he claims that the whole plot turns on whether the criminal will confess or be caught. It is not really about that at all. It is not a detective story, as the British Foreign Minister clearly thinks, but rather a deeply philosophical work of literature. By the way, we have already cited the English proverb in the novel that says you cannot make a horse from a hundred rabbits. Incidentally, I would advise Mr. Johnson to read Dostoevsky's other novels, or at least get to know their names. I am not going to recite them myself.

As a reasoned proof of the evidence for Russia's guilt, the British Ambassador to Moscow gave his colleagues a slide show of six pages, including the title page. These are comic strips passing themselves off as evidence. Once again they say nothing but "highly likely". One must assume that this is the same incontrovertible document that Mrs. May showed to her European Union colleagues, many of whom — to be fair, not all — accepted it as reliable evidence of Russia's guilt. Look at this travesty. We will circulate it. Using these six little squares as the basis for an argument is an insult to intelligence. How can one respect people who are convinced by this kind of thing? This thing. And do those who are doing the convincing not understand that they are being zombified, that they are participants in a collective psychosis?

Boris Johnson's revelation about the so-called dead cat on the table as simply a manoeuvre for diverting attention from other problems — and anyone who does not know what I am talking about can read his interview — is the clearest possible example of the no-holds-barred propaganda war that Britain is waging against Russia. By the way, on the subject of dead cats, according to Sergei Skripal's niece Viktoria, his household in Salisbury — supposedly contaminated by the poison — included two cats and two guinea pigs. Where are they now? What about the animals? Why has no one said anything about them? After all, their condition is also important evidence.

We are living in an era of the collective blurring of intellectual reason. I do not know what psychotropic substances are being used to turn the public into zombies, except for one — the media. It is a terrible weapon of our times. It is easy to use the media to manipulate human minds, and we can see that the Western media is very good at that. However, no intellectually sophisticated schemes are necessary. It is enough, in signalling to a basic instinct, to regularly and purposefully repeat the same unproven lie, gradually drilling it into people's consciousness and eventually presenting it as truth. It is Dr. Goebbels's method — repeat a lie a thousand times and it becomes the truth. We will seek answers to the questions we have posed. And if the answers are not provided, if there is no response, we will regard

that as an admission of the slander that has been made against us with no thought for the consequences. We will seek full cooperation on the Skripal case, and if that is refused, we will consider it an attempt to cover up the truth.

Everything that has happened leads us to believe what has basically been clear from the very beginning. This is a coordinated campaign, carefully prepared ahead of time. It is not accidental. The main goal is clear — discrediting and even delegitimizing Russia; accusing it of using terrible, inhumane weapons; concealing stockpiles in violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention; calling into question our role in resolving not just the situation in Syria, for instance, but anywhere at all; and calling into question the very principle of Russia's political legitimacy, while discrediting our position on the Syrian chemical issue. Basically, killing two birds with one stone.

Since the British authorities, without a moment's pause, have the audacity to say that it is "highly likely" that Russia was responsible for the incident in Salisbury, we also suggest that it is "highly likely" that the intelligence services of certain countries are behind this massive provocation. Russia, which has absolutely nothing to do with the poisoning of the Skripals, is more interested than anyone in establishing the truth. We will work to find out the truth based on the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention. If the British continue to operate based on suspicions passed off as evidence, if they continue to rely on assumptions based on conjecture rather than facts, they will confirm our much more than highly likely hypothesis that all this murky business, or rather fiction, is a gross provocation.

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

We can see that the only way to obtain an objective picture is by strictly adhering to the mechanisms of the Chemical Weapons Convention and collaborating on the investigation. We are also waiting for answers to our obvious questions from the British criminal investigation. We demand consular access to Yulia Skripal.

To sum up, this is what is going on. There has been no confirmation that the substance originated in Russia. We have already stated that we were not involved. But the demands that we admit our guilt are still being made. The British refuse to cooperate with us, on the pretext that victims cannot cooperate with criminals. I beg their pardon. Their categorization of us as criminals, without facts, evidence, a trial or an investigation is null and void. Meanwhile, a crime — possibly a terrorist act — has been committed on British soil against Russian citizens. And it is they who are the victims. That is why we are entitled to demand cooperation and the British are obliged to provide it. By the way, it was funny that at yesterday's meeting of the OPCW Executive Council, some of the United Kingdom's allies called on us to cooperate with the British. Evidently there had not been enough time to brief them on the correct way to proceed.

We have prepared a very simple draft press statement by the Security Council. It will be a truth-telling litmus test for the United Kingdom and its allies. If they bury it, as they did the last time, or turn its meaning on its head, it will be yet another confirmation and proof of their unscrupulous game.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): We did not seek this meeting, but we take requests from the Council for meetings very seriously. I am pleased to be able to update the Council on some developments, but I am also pleased to be able to provide the intellectual clarity that our Russian colleague has called for. In my statement, I will stick to the facts. Following Sergei and Yulia Skripal's poisoning in Salisbury on 4 March, the United Kingdom has launched one of the most comprehensive and complex investigations ever conducted of the use of a chemical weapon. It involves more than 250 police detectives, who are supported by a range of specialist experts and partners. They are trawling through more than 5,000 hours of closed-circuit television footage. They are examining more than 1,300 seized exhibits and interviewing more than 500 witnesses.

In the United Kingdom, the police are independent of the Government, but if there are more details that we can share with the Council as the investigation proceeds, we will be very happy to do so. We all know why that investigation is under way. It is because a military-grade nerve agent was used in an attempt to kill civilians on British soil. It was carried out recklessly and without regard for public safety. It was a weapon of mass destruction. A British police officer was in critical condition alongside the Skripals, and ordinary members of the public, going about their daily business, were put at risk.

I am glad not only to be able to inform the Council that Yulia Skripal is able to communicate and is getting better, but also to clarify what the Russian Ambassador

said about consular access. We have received a request from the Russian Consulate that we have conveyed to Yulia Skripal, and we are awaiting her response. That is an obligation under international law that the British Government takes very seriously, but there is also the question of Ms. Skripal's own wishes, which have to be taken into account.

The Russian Ambassador had several points to make about the United Kingdom's demands of Russia. As he outlined, on 12 March we asked the Russian Government a very clear question. Russia refused to respond and said that it considered the request null and void. It was indeed true that we asked for a response within 24 hours to the question of how a Russian-developed military-grade nerve agent came to be used on the streets of Salisbury and if it meant that Russia had lost control of its chemical-weapons stocks. We stated that Russia should declare its Novichok programme to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We gave 24 hours because it is a weapon of mass destruction. It was no ordinary poisoning and no ordinary attack. In our view, the circumstances justified that tight deadline. Notwithstanding, the Russians stated that the request was null and void. They did not request more time. They did not come to us and say that they wanted to look into it with us. They rejected the very premise of the request.

As the Russian Ambassador stated, we have said that it is highly likely that Russia carried out the assassination attempt. The British Government came to that conclusion because of positive identification by experts at Porton Down that the specific chemical used is a type of Novichok nerve agent. Porton Down is an accredited laboratory under and conforms to the Chemical Weapons Convention. It is allowed to conduct protective research.

The second reason that helped us come to our conclusion was the knowledge that Russia has produced that nerve agent within the past 10 years and remains capable of doing so. As the Prime Minister made clear in the British Parliament, we know that the Russian State has investigated ways of assassination through the use of nerve agents. The third reason is Russia's record of conducting State-sponsored assassinations. I do not want to detain the Council by going through a long list but I can provide examples if anyone would like to hear them. We also made our own assessment that Russia views defectors as suitable targets for assassination and, indeed, there are public statements from Russian leaders to that effect.

I would like to say a word about the use of the phrase "highly likely". We use it because under the British system, only a court can finally determine culpability. Therefore, the use of the phrase "highly likely" is a reflection of our judicial process and should not be construed as casting any doubt whatsoever on the likelihood of Russia being responsible.

I would also like to take this opportunity to address the Russian Ambassador's comment about Porton Down contradicting Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson. There was no contradiction. The Foreign Secretary was making clear that Porton Down was sure that the nerve agent was a Novichok — a point that it has subsequently reinforced. In the same interview, based on that information, additional intelligence and, as I said, the lack of an alternative explanation from the Russians, he goes on to make clear why we have reached the conclusion we have. What the Foreign Secretary said then and what Porton Down has said recently is fully consistent with what we have said throughout. In contrast, we have had innumerable theories from the Russians. I think we have counted some 24 in all. On 21 March, for example, the Russian Foreign Ministry stated that it believed terrorists were to blame. On 14 March, Mr. Lavrov said that the British response was aimed at distracting from Brexit. The use of chemical weapons on any country's territory is far too serious for those theories to hold water.

The Chemical Weapons Convention, which came into force 21 years ago, is clear in article VII that States should adopt legislation criminalizing activity prohibited under the Convention. That is why the United Kingdom is conducting a full investigation into the incident, including under our own Chemical Weapons Act. Because of it, in addition to the United Kingdom's criminal investigation, we have invited the OPCW — the relevant international body — to assist in verifying our analysis on the basis of article VIII of the Chemical Weapons Convention. It mandates the Technical Secretariat to provide technical assistance and technical evaluation to States parties.

Everything we have done has been consistent with the Chemical Weapons Convention and, if I may say so, I will not take any lectures on morality or review our responsibilities under such international conventions from a country that, as the Council debated yesterday

(see S/PV.8221), has done so much to block the proper investigation of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The United Kingdom's track record on that issue speaks for itself.

On 21 March, the OPCW deployed a team to the United Kingdom to visit the locations where the victims were exposed to a toxic chemical. The Director-General briefed the OPCW Executive Council yesterday on its actions. OPCW expert staff collected environmental samples from the scene and biomedical samples from the victims. The OPCW has verified the chain of custody. The samples have been sent to several designated laboratories for testing. The analysis from those laboratories will now be returned to the OPCW and they will produce a report. Contrary to Russian claims, the United Kingdom looks forward to sharing its findings once we have received that report.

Yesterday, Russia put forward a draft resolution at the Executive Council, proposing a joint investigation. There are several ways to view that investigation. I think the metaphor that I find most apt is that of an arsonist turned firefighter but, in this particular instance, the arsonist wishes to investigate his own fire. Having failed to obtain a joint investigation, the draft resolution received only 6 out of 41 votes in favour and, without waiting for the outcome of OPCW testing, Russia has reverted to a familiar path of undermining the international institution involved.

There is no construction we can place on Mr. Lavrov's remarks today other than that Russia will accept the results of the OPCW Salisbury poisoning investigation only if Russian experts participate in it. I am sorry but that does not make it an independent investigation. If Russia insists on having its own experts, it seeks to move away from the Chemical Weapons Convention's stipulation and it sets a test that no independent investigation could credibly tolerate. Regrettably, it is part of a wider pattern of irresponsible Russian behaviour. Russia discredited the work of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigation Mechanism on the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Members of the Council will be familiar with a pattern of aggression over the years in Georgia and Crimea. Flight MH-17 was shot down and there was a bungled attempt at a coup in Montenegro. Each time, such acts are accompanied by distortion and disinformation — the same sort of distortion and disinformation we saw yesterday in The Hague, in the Russian press conferences and in the Security Council today.

While we ourselves would not have called today's meeting, we hope to be able to brief the Council further once we have received the report from the OPCW. We believe that it is right that the Security Council remain seized of the flagrant use of chemical weapons. It is such use that threatens international peace and security. The threats to the Chemical Weapons Convention from attacks in Syria, Malaysia and now the United Kingdom pose a very serious challenge to the non-proliferation regime that the Council and others have carefully constructed in response to the terrible events of the past.

There is one country among us — Russia — that plays fast and loose with our collective security and the international institutions that protect us. It it is that reason that leads people to accuse Russia and take steps against it. It is not out of lack of friendship for the Russian people or lack of respect for Russia as a country. My own Foreign Secretary visited in the hope of establishing a more productive relationship with Foreign Minister Lavrov. But we cannot ignore what has happened in Salisbury. We cannot ignore Russia's turning a blind eye to the use of chemical weapons in Syria and in Salisbury, and we cannot ignore the way that Russia seeks to undermine the international institutions that have kept us safe since the end of the Second World War.

We believe that the actions of the United Kingdom stand up to any scrutiny. We have acted in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention throughout and, through the body charged for these purposes, the OPCW, we are happy to come to the Council at any time. We would be very willing to hold an open briefing at our mission here in New York if there are members of the United Nations who still have questions. We have nothing to hide, but I do fear that Russia might have something to fear.

Ms. Eckels-Currie (United States): Yesterday, the Council met on the tragic anniversary of the use of sarin gas in Khan Shaykhun, Syria (see S/PV.8221). Ambassador Haley urged us to use the meeting as the start of a renewed partnership and a renewed commitment to addressing chemical weapons. That is because, as she said, no one wants to live in a world where chemical weapons are used. We were reminded of the human toll of the devastation caused by chemical attacks and of the fact that we came together over many decades to build an international consensus banning these despicable weapons of war.

Sadly, today's meeting is not about any of that. Instead, it is yet another attempt by Russia to use the Security Council for political gains. It is an attempt to cast doubt on the attack in Salisbury, using phrases like "collective psychosis" and "propaganda war", and likening the media to a psychotropic substance that is used to manipulate the public. Russia also likened the response of any country that challenges the narrative of Russia to Nazi propaganda and Joseph Goebbels. This is not a tactic that is appropriate for this body. Let us remember the facts about what happened. We are discussing the egregious use of a military-grade nerve agent against two civilians in the United Kingdom — an attack that exposed hundreds of people, innocent bystanders and first responders to the effects of this agent. The fact that a permanent member of the Security Council was involved is especially appalling.

As the United States has made clear before, our support for the United Kingdom is unwavering, and we continue to stand in absolute solidarity with our British colleagues. We have stated previously, and do so again today, our firm belief that Russia is responsible for this chemical weapons attack on United Kingdom soil. Either Russia deliberately used this military-grade weapon or failed to declare and secure its stocks of this nerve agent. We strongly support the independent analysis of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) that is under way, as well as the criminal investigation of the United Kingdom into the use of chemical weapons on its sovereign territory, and believe those responsible for the attack must be held accountable.

The international community has rightly come together to express its outrage and take action. The United States, the United Kingdom, NATO and 27 other countries have expelled, all together, over 150 Russian intelligence officers. That is a testament to the grave concern that we and our partners share for the attempts of Russia to undermine international peace and security.

Meanwhile, Russia puts forward a series of conspiracy theories in an attempt to shift blame, with wild claims that the United Kingdom or the United States might be responsible. This disinformation and projection coming from our Russian colleagues is preposterous. Member States should not be fooled or led astray by these absurd efforts to dissemble from the facts. Russia is known to have developed military-grade nerve agents of the type used in the Salisbury attack. Russia has a well-documented record of conducting State-sponsored assassinations, including previously in the United Kingdom. High-ranking Russian officials have themselves made clear in public statements that defectors and so-called traitors are legitimate targets for assassination.

Yesterday, Russia tried to get the OPCW to adopt a decision that would have undermined its ongoing independent investigation into the Salisbury attack and that would have helped Russia to disguise its culpability. The members of the OPCW Executive Council overwhelmingly rejected Russia's proposal. Now Russia wants to try again at the Security Council. But the truth of Russia's involvement in the Salisbury attack remains, and the international community should remain united behind this truth. Once again, as Ambassador Haley said, if we do not change course now on chemical weapons, we will be fast approaching a new and far more dangerous reality for all of us. We must hold those who have used chemical weapons accountable and rebuild the global consensus that these weapons must never be used under any circumstances. As the Security Council, that is the goal we should be working to achieve, rather than using this Chamber to undermine the truth.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): Our position on the use of chemical weapons is well known, and we had an opportunity to reiterate that position yesterday (see S.PV.8221), one year after the chemical attack in Khan Shaykhun, Syria. It is absolutely important to underline again and again that the use of chemicals as weapons is unacceptable and constitutes a serious violation under international law.

However, 20 years after the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, we are seeing that this international regime is increasingly being undermined. We believe that it is in the best interests of all of us to do everything possible to maintain the use of chemical weapons as a taboo and to preserve the integrity of the regime for the sake of global peace and stability.

With regard to the Skripal case, we have been following the developments closely. We reiterate our sympathy and solidarity with the victims, as well as with the people and Government of the United Kingdom. The rationale for this is self-evident. The crime was committed on British soil. As we said last time, we hope that the necessary independent investigation will be conducted and also vetted, including through

consultation and the exchange of information on the basis of the relevant provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention, with a view to bringing those responsible to justice.

In this case as well, accountability is critical. We understand that the case has now been brought to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which is the appropriate international body to deal with the issue. There are indeed a number of issues surrounding the Salisbury incident that need to be clarified, and we note that upon the request of the Government of the United Kingdom, a technical mission of the OPCW was deployed recently and took samples from the individuals who were exposed to toxic chemicals. We note the updates by the Director-General of the OPCW yesterday at the special session of the Executive Council at The Hague. We hope that the report of the OPCW will eventually clarify those issues.

In the meantime, it is necessary that all the relevant parties cooperate with the OPCW and make every possible effort to resolve the issue in the spirit of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which clearly outlines what needs to happen in such cases. The lack of trust and the further deterioration of relations among major Powers on this issue will not help but further undermine the rules-based international order. It is very clear that we can address some of these difficult issues only if there is the necessary cooperation among us all and if we abide by the rules that we have set for ourselves in all transparency and fidelity to the truth.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): We are meeting today at the request of a member of the Security Council to discuss the 13 March letter (S/2018/218, annex) written by the British Prime Minister, which concerns a topic that we already met to discuss last month (see S/PV.8203). This meeting comes on the heels of a special meeting of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) held yesterday in The Hague on the same subject, at which Russia's attempt to have a draft decision adopted was overwhelmingly rejected. That meeting was held even before the OPCW had issued its findings concerning the incident at hand, thereby showing that yesterday's initiative, like today's, was a diversionary tactic in an attempt to sow confusion. It is therefore more important than ever to maintain a technical and objective approach to the issue.

Let us return to the facts. They are shocking, they are serious and they are unacceptable. On 4 March in Salisbury, a military-grade chemical agent, identified as belonging to a class of such agents known as Novichoks, was deployed in a public setting, targeting a former Russian intelligence officer and his daughter and contaminating a British police officer and civilians in the area. That was the first verified use of a chemical weapon in Europe since the end of the Second World War. It has been 100 years since the use of military-grade gas wrought destruction on European soil, during the Great War. France has stated at the highest levels of Government its full support for, and its unwavering solidarity with, the Government and the people of the United Kingdom. We renew them today.

While the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory at Porton Down has confirmed that the gas used belongs to the Novichok class and the United Kingdom continues to pursue its investigation in full compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention, I would like to reiterate France's full confidence in the work carried out by British investigators. France stands ready to make its expertise available to the United Kingdom, should it so desire. I also welcome the decision of the Director-General of the OPCW in responding positively to the British request to dispatch an assistance mission to the United Kingdom. The ongoing investigation must be completed independently and without interference. Given the information that the United Kingdom has communicated thus far, we share its assessment that there is no other plausible explanation for the attack than one involving Russia's responsibility. Although Russia advocates for cooperation, France was surprised by the Russian refusal to answer the United Kingdom's entirely legitimate questions. We call on Russia to shed light on matters of accountability with regard to the unacceptable Salisbury attack and notify the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons of any programmes that might not have been declared to the OPCW.

The ban on the use of chemical weapons is at the heart of the non-proliferation regime, which underpins our system of collective security. In that context, the full-scale re-emergence of those barbaric weapons in the Middle East, Asia and now in Europe cannot be tolerated. The taboo that we collectively established on the use of chemical weapons has been broken, including in Salisbury. That is an indication of how urgently we must reaffirm and consolidate the absolute prohibition

of chemical weapons. The normalization of the use of chemical weapons would signify a victory for barbarity over civilization and an unspeakable regression of the international order. That is why we cannot resign ourselves to such a fate, especially since — let us make no mistake — the normalization of the use of chemical weapons would create fertile ground for chemical terrorism, which we all fear, and, indeed, for which we would all pay the price.

France therefore will never tolerate allowing those who develop or use toxic agents to enjoy impunity. We recall our full support for existing institutions, in particular the OPCW. France will maintain its full commitment to supporting such institutions' activities with every resource at its disposal. That is the goal of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, which we launched last January. The gravity of what is at stake requires us to act. The use of chemical weapons by whomever and regardless of the circumstances runs equally contrary to our universal conscience and the most basic norms of international law.

Again, let us make no mistake: the use of chemical weapons poses a threat that could potentially ring the death knell of the very sustainability of the international regime on the non-proliferation of chemical weapons, which today is the most elaborate and successful of all international non-proliferation regimes. Allowing it to crumble without reacting would translate into accepting the weakening of the entire international regime on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, which we built laboriously together over the past decades and which is the keystone of the international security architecture. We are therefore in need of Russia's sincere and resolved commitment. Russia must be part of the solution, not the problem. Russia, which was one of the pioneers of the international non-proliferation regime, should be one of its pillars.

Because the threat is existential for us all, combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction must be more than ever at the heart of the priorities of the Security Council. If there is one area in which the Council has the moral and political responsibility to come together to act, this is it. If there is one area where the Council's credibility is at stake, and where there is no place for tactical one-upmanship, this is it.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Since last month, China has very closely followed the Skripal affair in Salisbury. The spokesperson of the Chinese Foreign Ministry has repeatedly stated our position on the issue. China has also stated its principled positions at the Security Council and at the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). China notes that, at the just-held fifty-seventh meeting of the OPCW Executive Council the parties could not reach consensus on a joint investigation concerning this case. We also note that the parties concerned have so far failed to reach an outcome that is acceptable to all.

China firmly opposes the use of chemical weapons by any country, organization or person in any circumstance. Any party or actor using chemical weapons must be brought to justice. China believes that such issues should be dealt with in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention and within the framework of the OPCW. China believes that it is urgent to discover the truth as soon as possible, carry out a comprehensive, impartial and objective investigation and draw conclusions based on hard evidence that will pass the litmus test of facts and history. China urges the countries concerned to carry out consultations, cooperate, avoid politicization and measures that might further exacerbate tensions and properly address the issue through dialogue, while adhering to the principles of equality and mutual respect.

At a time when the international community faces a plethora of challenges, all parties should abandon the Cold War mentality and group confrontation, work together to safeguard world peace, stability and tranquillity and jointly devote all efforts to building a new type of international relations based on mutual respect, equality, justice and win-win cooperation.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): Having heard the statements of the representatives of the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation, we also would like to share our observations on this issue.

Kazakhstan has a well-deserved international reputation as an unequivocal opponent of all kinds of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons and poisonous substances. We categorically condemn any use of weapons of mass destruction as immoral, inhuman and contrary to the principles of humanity.

We express our deep concern about the tragic incident involving the possible use of a weapons-grade chemical agent on the territory of the United

Kingdom. We look forward to the publication of all concrete facts and evidence confirming the use of any kind of weapons-grade chemical agent as well as the involvement of individuals, non-State actors or States.

We count on a comprehensive, transparent and impartial investigation of the incident in accordance with the existing norms of international law, in particular on the basis of the provisions of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, and expect the international community to be provided with the conclusions and evidence.

We express our hope for the normalization of relations and the restoration of trust between the leading States, the preservation of the integrity of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and joint efforts to counter common threats to security, as well as the renunciation of the so-called bloc mentality. We call on all interested States to unite and to resolve all issues resulting from the incident in the United Kingdom in accordance with the norms of international law, in line with the spirit and principles of the Astana Commemorative Declaration of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Mr. Orrenius Skau (Sweden): Sweden has been clear in condemning in the strongest terms the attempted murder of individuals on United Kingdom soil using a nerve agent. We stand fully behind the common European Union (EU) position on that matter. We share the assessment of the United Kingdom that it is highly likely that Russia is responsible and that there is no other plausible alternative explanation. We reiterate our strong solidarity with the United Kingdom, our close friend and EU partner, and our support for its ongoing investigation.

With regard to the chemical weapons use, as we have heard today, the United Kingdom is conducting its own independent police investigation. It is cooperating with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). That is in full conformity with the Chemical Weapons Convention. The United Kingdom has acted in the correct manner under the Convention. We underline the importance of respect for that process, in which the United Kingdom is cooperating with the OPCW, the independent international organization charged with overseeing the chemical-weapons ban. We look forward to being kept informed about the investigation, including the upcoming report regarding the sample analysis by the OPCW. We call on Russia to answer the questions posed by the United Kingdom.

Finally, let me once again underline Sweden's principled position on chemical weapons. Those abhorrent weapons are clearly prohibited under international law. All use of chemical weapons must be properly investigated and accountability must be ensured. We need to be vigilant in our efforts to ensure that the integrity of the chemical weapons ban is respected.

Mr. Radomski (Poland): Poland expresses its grave concern over the use of a nerve agant in an attempt to murder Mr. Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Ms. Yulia Skripal, on 4 March in Salisbury, United Kingdom. That reckless act also endangered the lives of innocent civilians.

In that regard, the Polish position was clearly expressed by the highest Polish authorities in the days following the attack in Salisbury. Poland undertook diplomatic steps to express its full solidarity with the British people and Government and condemned that unprecedented attack on the territory of the United Kingdom. We also aligned ourselves with the joint statements of the European Union that were made in The Hague during the most recent regular session of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and at its meeting yesterday.

Poland has always stood at the forefront of the efforts of the international community to contain the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The incident in Salisbury is yet another example of the violation of international law and of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). We remain strongly convinced that those responsible for the use of chemcial weapons must be identified and punished. Any such act cannot be left unanswered, since it undermines not only the basic sense of justice but also leads to the erosion of the non-proliferation and disarmament regime. As a result, it undermines the security of us all. We have full confidence in the investigation of the United Kingdom and we commend the transparency and continued information-sharing of the British Government in that regard.

At the same time, we welcome the ongoing cooperation between the United Kingdom and the OPCW in full compliance with the CWC. We look forward to a further discussion on the matter once the

results of the ongoing independent investigation by the team of experts of the OPCW are known.

We would like to recall that, on 22 March, the European Council unanimously agreed with the assessment of the United Kingdom — that it is highly likely that the Russian Federation is responsible for the attack in Salisbury and that there is no credible alternative explanation.

As we have already stated on other occasions, we support the decision of the United Kingdom to call on Russia to address the legitimate questions raised by the British Government and the international community and to provide an immediate, full and complete disclosure of its Novichok programme to the OPCW.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): We have listened carefully to the detailed statements made by the representatives of the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom on the incident that took place in Salisbury on Sunday, 4 March. It is truly regrettable that the Security Council has held meetings on two consecutive days to discuss the use of weapons of mass destruction in two different countries (see S/PV.8221).

The State of Kuwait is deeply concerned about the challenges facing the non-proliferation regime in our world today. We very much regret the attack perpetrated against Mr. Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Yulia, in the British city of Salisbury. The State of Kuwait stands with the United Kingdom and supports all the procedures and measures it has undertaken as part of the investigation into that case. We welcome the appeal to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to participate in the investigation as an impartial and independent international body specialized in that area in order to reveal the details of the incident. At the same time, we would like to express our sympathy and condolences to the victims. We wish Mr. Skripal and his daughter and those who were injured from the police and the public a speedy recovery.

The State of Kuwait holds a principled and firm position condemning and prohibiting the use, production, acquisition, stockpiling or retention of chemical weapons, as well as their direct or indirect transfer, in line with article I of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The State of Kuwait has been party to the Convention since 1997. We said the same during the urgent meeting convened by the Security Council on 14 March to discuss this issue (see S/PV.8203). The State of Kuwait believes in the importance of complying with international law and norms, and in the importance of maintaining international peace and security in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. Kuwait urges all the relevant parties to cooperate in the ongoing investigations in this case through the OPCW, in accordance with the articles and provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): As we stated at the previous meeting on this topic (see S/PV.8203), Bolivia categorically rejects the use of chemical agents as weapons as an unjustifiable and criminal act because it is considered a serious crime against international law, peace and security. We express our concern about the challenges facing the non-proliferation regime. We reiterate the need for an independent, transparent, objective, impartial and depoliticized investigation, in accordance with the existing rules of international law, in particular within the framework of the Chemical Weapons Convention, to clarify the events of 4 March.

We believe that cooperation between the relevant parties is essential for progress to be made, through the relevant diplomatic channels, in resolving this issue and, above all, in strengthening the non-proliferation regime.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): On 14 March, when we met in this Chamber at the request of our colleagues from the United Kingdom on the same issue of the chemical attack in Salisbury, United Kingdom (S/PV.8203), the first thing we did was to condemn the perpetration of that attack and to stand in solidarity with the victims and their families and with the Government of the United Kingdom. Today we begin our statement by reiterating the same message of condemnation.

Equatorial Guinea is closely following developments in relation to the incident involving the use of a chemical agent in Salisbury and hopes that the ongoing investigations will fully clarify the incident and that they will be comprehensive, fair and independent and in accordance with relevant international standards and procedures. The conclusions must be made public, and those responsible must be brought to justice.

Equatorial Guinea reiterates the hope that the relevant parties, the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation, aware of their great responsibility as permanent members of the Security Council, will set a credible example for the international community of the peaceful settlement of disputes. It is important that at a

historic and crucial time like this, when the relevance of the international structures for harmonizing coexistence — which both parties have worked so hard to establish and preserve — is constantly being questioned, London and Moscow use their long-standing maturity and international political experience to manage this new crisis in a moderate, suitable and reasoned manner through direct contacts and in close collaboration with the international legal instruments and entities established for this purpose, such as the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We hope that this diplomatic crisis, which has escalated, can also be defused.

Equatorial Guinea opposes the development, production, stockpiling, transfer and use of chemical weapons, as these activities contravene the Chemical Weapons Convention and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and we advocate for their total and complete prohibition and destruction.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): The Kingdom of the Netherlands supports the statement made by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom. I wish to make three points.

First, the chemical-weapon attack in Salisbury is unacceptable. Secondly, we fully support the investigation led by the United Kingdom. Thirdly, we call on the Russian Federation to fully cooperate with this ongoing criminal investigation.

As to my first point, on the unacceptability of the attack, during the previous meeting on this matter, on 14 March (see S/PV.8203), I expressed our shock at the reckless attack with a military-grade nerve agent on British soil. The Kingdom of the Netherlands strongly condemned that attack, in the Security Council and on many other occasions. The Kingdom of the Netherlands stands in full solidarity with United Kingdom.

As to my second point, on our support for the investigation, we underline that the perpetrators of this heinous act must face justice. The authorities of the United Kingdom are working, together with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), to achieve that end. At the meeting of the Executive Council of the OPCW in The Hague yesterday, Director-General Üzümcü confirmed that the United Kingdom had followed the correct procedure in this regard. We reiterate that we do not see any legitimate reason why anyone should try to delay, sidetrack, second-guess or discredit the criminal investigation being carried out by the United Kingdom authorities. We fully support the investigation led by the United Kingdom with the assistance of the OPCW.

As to my third point, on the need for Russian cooperation, on 22 March, the European Council condemned the attack in Salisbury in the strongest possible terms. It agreed with the assessment of the Government of the United Kingdom that it is highly likely that the Russian Federation is responsible for the attack and that there is no plausible alternative explanation. We therefore call on the Russian Federation to fully cooperate with the ongoing investigation and to provide full disclosure of its novichok programme to the OPCW.

In conclusion, any use of chemical weapons constitutes an unacceptable threat to international law, peace and security. I reiterate our call for full accountability for this horrific crime.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Côte d'Ivoire reiterates its principled position that all use of chemical weapons, in whatever form, in times of peace or in times of war, should be condemned. It stresses that it is imperative to shed full light on the use of chemical nerve agents in Salisbury, in collaboration with the relevant bodies, in particular the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). In that regard, my country urges all States to provide all necessary information to the OPCW with a view to assigning responsibility for the 4 March incident.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

Peru remains deeply concerned about the incident involving the use of a nerve agent in public spaces, which has seriously endangered the lives of at least three people in the United Kingdom. We wish to express our solidarity with the victims and with the population potentially exposed to the chemical agent in question.

Peru condemns all use of chemical weapons. We believe that such a practice constitutes, per se, a threat to international peace and security and a violation of the related non-proliferation regimes.

Accordingly, we reaffirm the importance of investigating the incident through the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and through the mechanisms and procedures established under the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of

Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. In that regard, we believe that the results of the analyses carried out by the mission deployed by the OPCW at the request of the British Government should be known. In line with the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes, we urge the parties concerned to cooperate fully with the investigations, with a view to determining the responsibilities and sanctions that may result from the case.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked to make a further statement.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Unfortunately, we heard nothing new from some of our colleagues, who continue unabashedly and unblinkingly to affirm Russia's guilt and demand that we shed light on the incident. We too would very much like to see the truth emerge, and we hope that the further we go, the more green shoots of truth will find their way towards the light. I would like to thank my Dutch colleague for his persistent proposal that we cooperate with the British, but I will most likely not do that, because the meaning attached to this proposal for cooperation is nothing like what we understand by it.

We are essentially being called on to respond to one question, which is "Admit that you did it." We answer, "We did not do it." To that, they say, "That is not enough. How did you do it?" We say, "Give us proof." They say, "No, but admit it anyway. It will be better that way." Can it really be that no one here understands that this is all a sort of theatre of the absurd? We have said repeatedly that the United Kingdom has not been following the Chemical Weapons Convention's procedures, and the Council can read about that in the memorandum that we have circulated.

I would like to note that today the Ambassador of the United Kingdom expressed her readiness to share information on the course of the investigation with Member States. We eagerly await that. We also hope that the information provided to us will be based on materials that are more convincing than the ones I showed the Council today. By the way, we found the explanation by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of the reasons and legal niceties for the use of the expression "highly likely" as an instrument of British justice — or in the context of British justice — very diverting. We will take it into consideration.

In conclusion, there is really nothing new under the sun. Once upon a time in Britain there lived a wonderful children's author — and not just for children — who was both a mathematician and a writer and who wrote a marvellous book entitled *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Here it is. I would like to read to the Council a short excerpt from the book about the trial of the Knave of Hearts. It is very short.

> "'There's more evidence to come yet, please your Majesty,' said the White Rabbit, jumping up in a great hurry; 'this paper has just been picked up.'"

Perhaps I should read the rest in English.

(*spoke in English*)

> "'What's in it?' said the Queen.
>
> "'I haven't opened it yet,' said the White Rabbit, 'but it seems to be a letter, written by the prisoner to — to somebody.'
>
> "'It must have been that,' said the King, 'unless it was written to nobody, which isn't usual, you know.'
>
> "'Who is it directed to?' said one of the jurymen.
>
> "'It isn't directed at all,' said the White Rabbit; 'in fact, there's nothing written on the *outside*.'...
>
> "'Are they in the prisoner's handwriting?' asked another of the jurymen.
>
> "'No, they're not,' said the White Rabbit, 'and that's the queerest thing about it.' (The jury all looked puzzled.)
>
> "'He must have imitated somebody else's hand,' said the King. (The jury all brightened up again.)
>
> "'Please your Majesty,' said the Knave, 'I didn't write it, and they can't prove I did: there's no name signed at the end.'
>
> "'If you didn't sign it,' said the King, 'that only makes the matter worse. You *must* have meant some mischief, or else you'd have signed your name like an honest man.'
>
> "There was a general clapping of hands at this: it was the first really clever thing the King had said that day ...
>
> "'That's the most important piece of evidence we've heard yet,' said the King, rubbing his hands ...

"'Let the jury consider their verdict,' the King said, for about the twentieth time that day.

"'No, no!' said the Queen. 'Sentence first — verdict afterwards.'"

(*spoke in Russian*)

Does that remind you of anything, Mr. President? But if Council members think this has to do only with fairytales from a previous century — which are very relevant ones, incidentally — I would like to show them one more thing, an article from today's *Independent*, entitled "Whether we can prove Moscow's involvement in the Skripal case or not is irrelevant". Here is one brief quote from it.

(*spoke in English*)

"The Russians' response to all of this is to say "prove it", as if in a court of law. Even on a legal test such as being beyond reasonable doubt or on the balance of probabilities, the Russians are plainly culpable."

I rest my case.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the United Kingdom has asked to make a further statement.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I will not detain my colleagues for very long. There is another very good quote from Lewis Carroll in *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There*: "Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast." I think that is the quote that suits my Russian colleague best. I just wanted to say that we are of course committed to keeping the Council updated. We will share with the Council, at the Council's request, as much information as we can, as and when we have it, and in accordance with developments.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.